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Decision Dilemma

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ARE YOU IN A

Decision Dilemma?

by Carol Dee Legg

Technical Journalism Senior

CLICK click zip zing—whew! what a fast rate of speed at which we're living!

And how our brains must race to keep up with this accelerated existence! We seem to be able to cram much more "living" into a lifetime than was possible in the "good old days." Why? Because more and quicker decisions are demanded of us every minute.

But because of the inevitable pressure that goes with decision-making, many of us get lost in the dust of dynamic, strong-headed, decisive leaders.

Take your roommate for instance. (It's always easier to look objectively at someone other than ourselves.) She gets up in the morning, asks you and three or four other friends what she should wear . . . she ponders for weeks about dropping a course and is still trying to decide what to major in . . . she can't decide what book to read during study hours and ends up doing nothing . . . she wastes time "gabfesting" because she can't make up her mind to get some sleep—she's typical, like you and me.

And we rationalize and generalize and antagonize ourselves with excuses for our indecisive behavior. We make no headway because we're overlooking the fundamental, underlying reasons for our inability to make sound decisions without undue quandries.

Figure out why

As is the case with most personal problems, an inferiority complex, which exists either now or in the past, plays a large part in crystallizing "mousy," "wishy-washy" traits that prevent a person from making confident judgments. When we feel inferior to others, we are afraid that any decision we might make will conflict with the thinking of our stronger friends. The already shallow ego of one with an inferiority complex cannot withstand the blast of opposition.

Or perhaps sometime in the past a decision of ours has yielded unfortunate consequences. This shatters our confidence and becomes a barrier to our judgments.

There are a lot of people in the world—and if you shy away from decisions perhaps you're one—who prefer the role of a follower rather than a leader. Followers seldom find it compulsory to be decisive. But as prospective college graduates—from highly specialized fields, at that—we can't avoid leadership entirely. And we can't become leaders during the split-second acceptance of a diploma. Leadership is acquired with practice and usage, just as is any skill.

Realize the outcomes

Procrastination, the Siamese twin of indecisiveness, often trips our progress because, after all, procrastination is usually the putting off of decisions. We probably have all wrestled with our own procrastination problems and realize the pitfalls which result. But we may not have realized that it is not a weakness in itself; our decision-making power is a factor which must be developed first.

A chronic procrastinator has usually become so because he has been unable to make up his mind. There are several other very unglamorous outcomes of indecisive behavior: a person becomes a parasite for suggestions, he has weak convictions, his personality lacks strength, he may find it hard to hold a job and frustration may result—a nervous breakdown could be the end product.

Strike an in-between note

With every personality trait, extremes are to be avoided. So it is with making decisions. We all know people who have been "carried away" with their own power. They become outspoken, domineering, often conceited and egotistical. Stagner, noted psychologist, reminds us that there is a "positive dominance drive, an innate tendency to achieve a status superior to others. . . ." It is but an extension of this that produces in a person not only a mind of his own, but a mind for everyone else, too.

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Decision Dilemma

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On the demarcation line between inability to make decisions and overstepping one's own power is the key word "maturity." A mature person has acquired an evenly balanced set of values, he is able to weigh the pros and cons of an issue, he knows **WHEN** to make a decision and he knows **HOW** to make a decision.

Go about it systematically

Douglas Lurton, in his book *The Power of Positive Living*, presents a formula for aid in decision-making. It consists of questions to ask yourself when quandrying on an important matter and he lists them in order:

1. *What are you trying to accomplish?*

This has to do not only with the question of the moment, but with your lifetime as a whole. What are you trying to do? And if you don't know, seek a competent advisor. Once you have decided on your goal, don't be "thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls upon the rails," as Thoreau put it.

2. *What are the pertinent facts?*

One cannot intelligently decide something without knowing all the facts involved. Incorrect assumptions and mis-made conclusions are the result of one not being completely informed. Keep your eyes, ears and mind open.

3. *What are the possible courses of action?*

After you've looked over the range of possible decisions that could be made and analyzed each for its result, weight them against each other. Decide which would be the wisest.

4. *What are you going to do about it?*

"Back up your decision with positive action," states Lurton. And **WHEN** are you going to do something about it? Timing is important.

So we have an organized pattern for our decision-making. And all we have to do is build up the self-confidence that makes it possible to push a decision.

Say "yes" instead of "no" as many times as possible during the next day. Practice weighing the pros and cons of an issue in double-quick time. Search for ways to speed up decision-making—and above all, **MAKE UP YOUR MIND!**